

## ***“Keep Going”***

### **Devoted to God**

Hebrews 12:1-14

Pastor Jeff Stivason

August 4, 2017

**Jeff:** Okay. Good morning.

**Men:** Good morning.

Well why don't we start off with a word of prayer? Don, would you play and lead us?

*(Music)*

Our heavenly Father, we are thankful for this day You've provided for us. You are the Giver of all good gifts. Father, as we bow before You, we're thankful to be Yours. We know that before that we were of the kingdom of darkness. We were lost in our sin. We were slaves to it. And yet You saved us by Your mercy and grace, revealed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Magnificently you loved us when we were unlovable, when we were wretches, when we were condemned. And yet You brought us out of the miry pit. You put our feet upon a solid rock, the rock of Jesus Christ. And in Him we have His righteousness and all of the other blessings and benefits that flow from Him.

Father, as we bow before You, we are mindful that not only do we possess the knowledge of the gospel and its riches, but we also possess the privileges of sonship in that we can come before You and lay before You our concerns and our requests. And Father, today we think about Sarah and Sue. And Lord, we lift them up to you and ask that You will bless them. And we pray that Your grace would be poured out upon them in a particular and in a significant and in a specific way. Father, we also pray for Bob and ask that Your hand would be upon him for healing. We pray, Father, and continue to pray for our brother Bruce. We pray not only for his health, but also for his return.

Father, we ask and pray that You will work in us today. Father, we pray that as we sit here and study Your word, as we work our way through important concepts and topics, we pray, Father, that You will do a work in us. We pray that we will be different than even when we came. And we pray, Father, that as You mold Christ in us, we would be to Your glory. Indeed we will be to Your glory. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Okay. Well, let's think about today and what we're going to be doing. Let me just mention to you that today is our last day on this particular topic. We are at class #9. There are ten chapters in the book, and I've just brought 8 and 9 together. And so this is our last morning.

As it stands now, I've got three mornings, and I'm not sure what we're going to do yet. But I'll try to have that worked out by next Friday. *(Laughter)*

So let's get started today and look at this last section. Today we're going to look at Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1-14. And let's just read 12:1-14 for now. We'll save 8:29 of Romans for just a little bit later. Who has a strong voice so he can read all fourteen verses and so that we can all hear?

**Participant:** *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and*

## **“Keep Going”**

*Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.*

*“You have not yet resisted to bloodshed in striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him. For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’*

*“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we all have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.*

*“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful. Nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather healed. Pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the LORD.”*

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Okay. Thank you for that. All right, so as we gather together today, we come to this last session. And I want to remind you of how we’ve been looking at the process of sanctification. We said that it’s probably best to look at it in terms of the mixing bowl full of batter rather than a step-by-step process.

And why is that? Well, for instance, when you think about putting off and putting on, you can’t do that as a step unto itself without the renewal of your thinking. All of these things are at work at the same time in the renewal process.

And so when we think about sanctification, what God is doing in us to make us what we are in Jesus Christ, it’s best to think of it in terms of a mixing bowl. You pick out that chocolate chip, and it’s got all the other ingredients of the batter stuck to it. That’s the way to think about sanctification.

Now as we think about the last part of the process of sanctification, we’re going to think about *perseverance*. And we’re going to think about that idea of what it means to cross the finish line. And that’s going to be ever so brief. But that’s what we’re going to do this morning. And as we do, I want to look at these three topics on our outline.

I want to remind us once again that it’s a difficult race that we run. However, God has given encouragements along the way. And I want to talk again about the finish line and what that’s going to look like when we cross it. So it’s those three things.

The first thing I want to talk about is *a difficult race*, the difficult race that we run. Now when you look at the book of Hebrews,—and that’s where we are today in the main—when you look at the book of Hebrews, one of the things that you discover is that there

## ***“Keep Going”***

are two basic hindrances along the way. And we read about those today in Hebrews chapter 12. We learned that there are *weights* and there are *sins*.

Now there’s a question here. The question is this. Are the weights the sins, and the sins the weights? And so this would be a *hendiadys*, or two words that speak about the same thing. Is that what’s going on here? Or is it two separate things?

And I think that what we have here are two separate things. And that’s the way Dr. Ferguson goes in his book. He thinks there are two separate things here. So let’s think about those two separate things for a minute when we think about weights and sins. What are they?

Well weights, I think, ought to be construed as those things that aren’t necessarily sinful. But when they take a position in our lives that assume a priority that they ought not to have, then they become a weight to us.

Now you say to me, “What are you talking about?” Well let me give you this illustration. Let’s say that you’re a swimmer. When you go out to a swim meet, you put a suit on. And then you jump in the water to engage your competitors in the swim meet. That’s a weight that you don’t need.

Now you say, “Okay. Well what about the sin?” Okay, think about being a swimmer again. And before you go out to swim, you make two forms for your feet, and then you put your feet into those forms and you pour cement around them and let them harden. (*Laughter*) And then you say, “All right, I’m ready to swim.” And you jump in? What’s gonna happen? You’re not going to be hindered, like the suit would hinder you. You’re going to drown and die, okay? (*Laughter*) That’s what sin’s going to do to you. It’s going to drag you to the bottom, and you’re going to die.

So that’s the way to think about the two. You shouldn’t say, “Oh, the weights aren’t anything then!” No, no no, no! There’s a likelihood of drowning just because of the weights. But they’re encumbrances. They’re things that you don’t need that you can get rid of.

What are some of those things? Well look, men; I want to tell you something. Can I just be real with you and say that sometimes football can get in your way?

**Participant:** No! (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** Yes. (*Laughter*) Well listen, I want to give you a solution. I know training camp has started. (*Laughter*) I want to give you a solution. Hockey’s coming. (*Laughter*) Hockey’s a safe zone. (*Laughter*) Do I sound like I’m rationalizing? Okay, I probably am.

No, those things can get in our way! Listen to me, men! When you have two or three hockey games on in one night, that can be like wearing a suit to a swim meet. And we need to prioritize. That’s why they make DVRs, so that you can fast forward through whatever. I digress still. (*Laughter*)

But you know what I mean. Look! When we know what’s in the stats, when we know what’s going on in the training camp better than we know what’s going on in the Scriptures, we need to check ourselves and say, look; there’s a real problem. I think I’m being encumbered by a weight.

Football’s not bad. But I’ll tell you what. I think I’ve given it a priority in my life that it ought not to have, that sort of thing. And I think that we need to pay attention to that.

## ***“Keep Going”***

But not only that. I think that it's very true that sin so easily entangles, doesn't it?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Jeff:** And I want to say this to you. I have a friend who just got himself caught up in a mess. And he's going to lose his job over it. It's not public yet, but it's a ministry job. And I'll tell you what. My heart breaks for that. But I want to tell you something. I looked at him and I thought, "Now that guy is a solid guy. That guy is a guy who sort of lives above the fray." And you know, it was just a reminder to me yesterday when I heard it from another friend of mine, that we need to be careful if we think we're standing firm, lest we fall, right? Sin is out to kill us, and we shouldn't flirt with it and play with it. It's out to kill us.

You know, there was a football coach. I was telling my wife this. I can't remember the details. There was a football coach who was trying to impress upon his players that cocaine kills. And he said, "You know, the problem is that they'll go to these parties." And he said that the cocaine will come out and they'll all sort of hang around. So what he did was that he brought a good old boy in who had a bag with him. And he emptied out the contents of the bag, and it was a rattlesnake. And he said that football team ran!

And after they corralled the rattlesnake, put it back in the bag and set it on the way, he assembled the team back and he said, "Look, men, that rattlesnake will kill you." And he said, "You did good to run." But he said, "Cocaine will kill you as well, and you'd better run from that."

Men, listen to me. Sin will kill you, and you have to run from it. You have to flee from it. Hindrances, sins and weights.

Now I just want to include this part. What's this? This is a frog in a pot and somebody is turning up the heat. Now we all know what happens when a frog is put in a pot and you slowly turn up the heat. The frog beside him tells the tale. He's dead. And the other frog who's still alive is saying, "Ah, this is the good life; I love a good soak."

And you know, that's the way we can be. We become accustomed to it. Listen! If you say, "I don't know what you mean by that,:" if you watch a fair amount of TV, do me a favor. Quit watching TV for about two or three months and then go back to it. And you'll be appalled at the things that you don't give a thought to now. That's what I mean. That's the kind of thing I mean.

So how can we tell when we are weighted down? How can we tell when we are flirting with sin more than we are with our wives? Well, I'll tell you what. There are signs for that, and I want to give you just four. There are others. I want to give you four today.

First of all, Hebrews 2:1, 3:2 and 12:2, right from our text, tells us that there is a lack of concentration toward spiritual things when we are flirting with sin, or when we are entangled with things that ought to be of a different and lower priority.

**Transcriber's Note:** Hebrews 2:1. *"Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it."*

Hebrews 3:1-2. *"Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the High Priest and Apostle of our confession, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house."*

## ***“Keep Going”***

Hebrews 12:2. *“And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of our faith.”*

**Jeff:** So there’s a lack of concentration. I don’t need to spell that out, but I’m just going to give you this idea. In 2:1 there’s this whole idea of paying attention. It’s a nautical term, in the sense that this was a word used for a man who was bringing a ship into port. He had to pay attention. He couldn’t be bouncing off of other ships as he was steering his ship into port. He needed to pay attention, close attention.

And that’s what we need to do with spiritual things. We need to fix our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ and pay attention to Him.

The second thing is that *we’ll have a lack of appetite*. And that’s in Hebrews 5:12-14.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Hebrews 5:12-14. *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice, to distinguish good from evil.”*

**Jeff:** And basically you’ll notice that he says to them, *“You need milk, not solid food. For solid food is for the mature.”*

This is a pretty interesting section because in this section one of the things that he says is that “you’ve become dull,” or sluggish. He says it twice. It’s translated differently, depending on your translation. But he says it twice. And his point is they’ve just become soggy, watered soft. They’ve been swimming with a suit on, as it were. And they’re just hard of hearing.

And listen, brothers. I want to tell you something. You know when that’s true of you. And so you know it’s true of you when you have a lack of appetite, when you just don’t feel like engaging the Word. You think to yourself, “Well, you know, I’ll not do it today.” Then the next day you wake up and say, “Ooh, I’ll do it. I still remember what I read two days ago. I’ll just put it off and I’ll not do it today.” Then day three comes along and you say, “Well, I’m pretty busy today. I’ll do it tomorrow.” And then tomorrow comes and you forget that you even forgot, right? And so you have a lack of appetite for the Word.

Look, when you have a lack of appetite for real food, don’t you go to the doctor and say, “Something’s wrong with me.” And some of you will even start to think, “Maybe I have cancer, or maybe I have something really wrong with me. I’m losing my appetite.”

But when we lose our appetite for God’s word, do we have a care? Brothers, we need to have a care. We need to recognize that as a symptom of spiritual decay in our lives. It’s a serious thing, lack of appetite.

*Lack of discernment.* When we are no longer discerning, when we fail to exercise wisdom in decision making, when we fail to recognize that *“the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”*, as Sig was telling us, then we have a real problem. We need that discernment.

How does that discernment come? Well it comes when we know the Word and the Word guides our lives. If you don’t know the Word, you’re not going to make discerning decisions about anything. It’s just not going to happen. So lack of discernment is another sign of spiritual decay.

## **“Keep Going”**

And a *lack of true worship* is another sign of decay. Look, here’s the deal. When you go into a worship service, let me just talk about your heart here at this point. When you go into a worship service, and you would rather have stayed in bed than gotten out of bed and come to worship, if there isn’t a sense in which you take a great deal of pleasure in Christ and leading your families into worship, then there’s a problem. I’m talking at this point about heart worship before God. Is your heart right before God? And that’s the fourth sign of spiritual decay.

But before I do that, I’ve got some questions for you. These are hard. It’s going to be challenging to you, and I’m not apologizing for that. *(He laughs.)* Hey!

They rested on me before I’m bringing them to you.

I felt guilty about them;

You might as well, too.

*(Laughter)* I’m sharing the burden. *(Laughter)*

So these are questions that I think will pierce your heart. And they’ll help you think through this idea of weights and sins and signs of spiritual decay.

First of all, *am I guarding my heart against the deceitfulness of sin and the disobedience of unbelief?* You say to me, “Brother, if there’s one thing that I do not struggle with, it is unbelief. I am solid. Even if I don’t go to church, I want you to know that I am a firm believer in the sovereignty of God. Even when I don’t pray for four or five months, I believe God is there.” And I want to say to you that if those are the kinds of things that you’re saying, than you’re not guarding your heart against unbelief, because you’re a practical atheist.

If you’re not praying to God for days and days and days and months and months and months, and maybe even years on end, you’re living like an atheist, practically speaking. So you can say, “I believe in the sovereignty of God” all you want, but it doesn’t really matter because it’s only lip service.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** *Do I understand the role of fellowship in encouraging me to persevere?*

Brothers, we’ve talked about what *koinonia* means. It’s important; it’s vital. It’s that mutual relationship of investment in the gospel. That’s a really important question for you, because here’s the issue.

Look. I just had a meeting with a person a couple of weeks ago. The person said to me, “Look, I don’t trust pastors. I don’t trust elders, and I don’t know you. But I want you to know right up front that I don’t like you.” *(Muffled laughter)* Now that relationship only persisted for two years. *(Laughter)* But I want to tell you something. That’s a problem! That’s a problem when we feel like we’re the only ones. And boy, I’ll tell you what, it’s easy to do that.

I love Arthur W. Pink. He’s a great guy.

**Transcriber’s Note:** An early twentieth-century British Reformed Baptist author and theologian.

**Jeff:** But if you read his biography, oh! He finally found a guy that he thought he could get along with. *(Laughter)* No, really! He was living in Scotland. It was the end of his life. He finally found a guy he thought he could get along with. And he reached out to

## **“Keep Going”**

him, and the guy was a pastor. And the problem was that the one had his study time in the morning, and the other had his study time in the evening, and neither one of them were willing to forsake them in order for them to get together to meet. So they never got together to meet.

The life of Pink is a very sad tale, though his writings have done wonders for a great many people. But do I understand the role of fellowship? That’s what I’m encouraging.

*Do I cultivate a storehouse of memories regarding God’s persevering grace?* You know, the Psalmist tells us continually to “*remember the mighty works of God.*” And I want to tell you something. You need to do that! You know, if you read John Flavel, the Puritan who wrote *The Mystery of God’s Providence*, if you read that book, one of the things he says is that you need to invest your time in thinking about the providences of God in Scripture so that you’ll be able to understand to some degree the providences of God that take place in life. You need to invest in a spiritual memory of these things.

*And through the ministry of the Word in the church, do I fix my eyes on Jesus Christ?* Those are important questions for us, to keep it real with ourselves. Yes?

**Participant:** Jeff, could you make that a little more concrete? What do you mean by that last point?

**Jeff:** Yes. Thank you for asking that.

**Participant:** No problem.

**Jeff:** Who has a New American Standard Bible? (*Laughter*) Okay. Turn to Romans chapter 10. Now if you don’t have a New American Standard Bible, here’s what I want you to do. Just leave your Bible alone. (*Laughter*) I don’t; you can go there. I have an ESV, but I think the New American Standard Bible translates this rightly.

So look in verse 14, and I’m going to read mine to you. And then we’ll have it read from the New American Standard. “*How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*”

Now the phrase I want you to catch is that second one. “*And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have not heard?*” So go ahead and read yours.

**Participant:** Just verse 14?

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** “*How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?*”

**Jeff:** Okay. Read that again.

**Participant:** “*How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?*”

**Jeff:** Keep on reading.

**Participant:** “*How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?*”

**Jeff:** “Whom they have not heard.” In other words, the emphasis in the New American Standard is that Christ is the One speaking, and He is the One that they hear. How do they hear Him? Through the preaching of the Word.

Now the ESV says, “*of whom they have not heard*”, thus indicating that the preacher speaks of Him. But I think the New American Standard has it right.

## **“Keep Going”**

Now why do I say that? Well look in Ephesians chapter verse 17. This is Paul speaking of Christ. “*And He came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near.*”

Now it says that Christ came and preached peace to them. Now when in the world did Christ ever make it to Ephesus to preach to them? Well, the interesting thing is that if you go on to chapter 4, he talks about gifts given to men. And all the gifts that he mentions in this particular chapter are gifts of handling revelation.

How is it that Christ is heard in the church? He is heard when faithful men exposit the word of God. And people in the church are not hearing *of* Christ, but they are *hearing* Christ. It is the word of Christ Himself faithfully preached that is being spoken into the hearts of people.

Look. When you read the Scriptures, oftentimes that’s the way the word of God is mentioned. Think about 1 Thessalonians. It’s the preaching of the word of God that Paul has in mind when he talks about the power of it. And so there’s the idea. So you ask me, “What do you mean by that last statement?” What I mean is that Christ has given gifts to men. And those gifts to men that He has given, among those gifts are gifts of handling revelation. And those gifts are to be used so that people can hear Christ. Does that make sense?

**Participant:** That’s great. Could you go a slide back? I have “do I through.”

**Jeff:** Yes. Do I, through the ministry of the Word in the church, fix my eyes upon Christ? Okay? All right.

Let’s talk about some encouragements. There’s a cloud of witnesses in this text. Now the question is this. You often hear people say this. “So And So is watching me from above. Paul is watching me from above.” I don’t think the idea is that of a spectator here. I think the idea is that of participation. I am running the same race that those ran before me. So the idea is not *spectator*, but *participant*.

Now you know what that feels like, right? I mean, you know, it can be in any walk of life. It can be that I raced in the race that my hero ran in. For instance, it may be Phil Ryken, who was in the pulpit after James Montgomery Boice.

Have you ever noticed Tenth Presbyterian Church? There was Donald Grey Barnhouse, and then there was James Boice, and James Boice quoted Barnhouse. And then there was Philip Graham Ryken. He quotes Boice and Barnhouse. And then there’s Liam Gallagher, and he quotes Philip Graham Ryken and Boice and Barnhouse. You know, there’s a sense in which there’s a tradition that goes along with serving in that pulpit. And the idea then is that they served in a pulpit where Boice no longer is. Ryken is no longer there, and certainly Barnhouse isn’t there. But the idea is that they participate in the lineage. And I think that’s the idea here with the cloud of witnesses.

But not only is there the encouragement that we are participants in the same race, but Somebody has gone before us. Jesus is the *Archaegos*. The word *archaegos* is translated in a number of ways. *Pioneer* is one of those ways. He is the One who cuts the way.

Now this is what you have to understand. When you think about Jesus, Jesus cannot be thought of in just one way when you think of Him in terms of the Scripture. We oftentimes think about Jesus as the atoning sacrifice, and He is. And there’s nothing that



## “Keep Going”

we can add to our redemption. No work that we do can add to our redemption, nothing of the kind.

But 1 Peter says that Jesus is also our Example. And when the writer of Hebrews talks about Him being our *Archaegos*, in both chapter 2 and in chapter 12, one of the things that we have to keep in mind is that he is saying that He is the Pioneer of the way. He is the first runner in the race. Paul says that He is “*the first fruits of the harvest*” in 1 Corinthians 15. He is the first fruit of the greater harvest.

So there’s a sense in which Jesus has gone before us as the Pioneer, the *Archaegos*. He has cut the way.

And so there’s the encouragement of participating in the race with others. There’s the encouragement of Jesus having gone before us. And then how about this? *There is the loving discipline of the Father.*

Now we’ve talked about this the last time. This is the importance of having a good father—a good earthly father, not a perfect earthly father. None of us will have had a perfect earthly father, nor will we be one. You may be a perfect grandfather, but that’s another point. (*Laughter*)

But our dads, if they were loving disciplinarians, in some way approximate what we’re supposed to think about the Father in heaven. Now there are some good questions. I don’t know about you, but here was the deal. My dad would always bring the discipline together with the questions. Sometimes it was the questions that really hurt most, right?

And so what are the questions? Well, let me discipline you. (*Laughter*) How about it? *Am I willing to resist sin to the point of shedding blood?*

Now why do I say that? I say that because the writer of Hebrews says, “*You have not resisted sin to the point of shedding blood.*” And what I’m asking you then, what I’m really asking you, is how hard are you willing to battle the sin that so easily entangles you?

You know, I want you to know something. You may say to me, “Look, I struggle. Sometimes I give in really easily. Sometimes I fight a little harder. Some days sin can’t touch me”

Look! The bottom line is that you’ve got to continue to ask yourself. What did my Savior do? My Savior resisted to the point of shedding blood.

I’ve never atoned for my own sins. But because He atoned for me, and I’m becoming what He made me to be, I need to put off this body of sin. And what am I willing to do in order to do it?

And you see, this is the kind of thing you see elsewhere in Scripture, where Jesus says, “*If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.*” He’s not calling you to literally pluck out your eye. Why? Because your mind is still there, which is what caused your eye to look there to begin with. And you say, “Well at least I won’t have my eyes.” Yes, you won’t have your eyes. But you’ll have the pictures that you looked at in your head before you plucked out your eye! (*Laughter*) Do you get the idea? Okay.

*Am I living in the light of Scriptural encouragements?* Again, I can’t tell you enough how important the word of God is for growth in grace and growth in godliness. You’ve got to be in the Word. It is the Word that will change you because it is the word of God

## **“Keep Going”**

applied to you by the Holy Spirit. If you’re not in the Word, and I want to go so far as to say that if you’re not thinking about the Word, reading the Word, putting yourself under the preaching of the Word, you probably ought not to expect yourself to change much.

*Am I convinced that without holiness I will never see the Lord?* I didn’t say that. The writer of Hebrews said that. You understand what that means as we’ve gone along. Don, go ahead.

**Don:** Go ahead and finish. I’ll speak when you’re done.

**Jeff:** Okay. So what do I mean by this? I mean what the Biblical writers mean. There are two understandings of sanctification. But both of those understandings of sanctification, which I’ll mention in just a minute, are a part of the twofold grace of God that we receive in Jesus Christ. In other words, if you say, “I am justified by faith,” then you must understand that accompanying that, in union with Christ, is the renovation of life. It is sanctification.

Now if you say, “I am in Christ,” what you’re saying is that I am a justified man who is being renovated. And what you’re saying is—and let’s think about the renovation that you possess in union with Jesus Christ—what you’re saying is that I have been taken from the kingdom of darkness and placed into the kingdom of light. That’s the definitive aspect of my sanctification. And I am learning and growing into the citizen of the kingdom of light that I have been made to be.

So when he says that without holiness no one will see the Lord, that’s what he means. He’s not saying that without work—I just need to pull myself up by my own bootstraps and work—he’s not saying that at all. That’s not a proper understanding of sanctification and where that fits in union with Christ. Don?

**Don:** Jeff, it says that if you’re not disciplined, then you’re illegitimate children and not sons. So I’m just wondering, does that mean that if things are going really well in our lives, no catastrophes or whatever, that something is wrong? How should we understand that?

**Jeff:** Well I think that the Lord has blessed some people, and we cannot discount that. I think Job was a blessed man before he had trials. And so I don’t think that we should say that just because the Lord has given me blessings that He must not love me, and I know that’s not what you’re saying. He must not be loving me and disciplining me. I think that what we need to understand is that we’re all in different places in our Christian walk.

So we can be living a blessed life. Don, the danger is that we can also be living far below what it means to live the Christian life. Things can be going well for us and we can be saying, “Ah, the Lord is blessing me! I only read my Bible once a month. But hey, everything is going well.” Maybe there is a disciplinary action coming in that your heart is being hardened toward all this. And it’s going to take that reading of the Scriptures to slap you out of it. Or maybe it’s going to take that Christian brother who has invested in you to say to you in an honest way, “Look, brother. I know you and we’ve known each other for years, and you have no cause to feel blessed at this point.” You may be blessed in a material way, but you’re not living like one who recognizes that it’s from the hand of God, right? You’re living like you think it’s yours.

## ***“Keep Going”***

**Participant:** Wouldn't you say, though, that Job was living a blessed life when he went through his trials?

**Jeff:** Oh, sure.

**Participant:** Because that's where the word *perseverance* comes in. You don't lose your blessings. You just have to persevere.

**Jeff:** Yes, that's a very good point. The other thing that I would say to you is that when you think about the discipline of the Lord, somebody may have an outward blessing from the Lord and may be struggling deeply with sin, to put sin off. And maybe the reason why they're being blessed in their lives in such fruitful ways is because they're really working in battles that you don't even see.

**Participant:** When you talk about if you're only reading the Scriptures one time every month, well then I would say, what about once a week? What about once a day? Maybe you need to read it twice a day.

**Jeff:** How about consistently and regularly?

**Participant:** There you go.

**Jeff:** I like those words a lot.

**Second Participant:** I like them to think that I'm useful. (*Laughter*) I think about the Orthodox brothers. They fast 1/3 of the year. Coptic Christians fast over 50% of the year. I don't fast at all. Am I living well below the Coptic Christians? I'm getting a little nervous at this point because you say, have I resisted sin to the point of the shedding of blood? And it's kind of consistent with the other thing. I say no. I don't resist sin very much. I mean—

**Participant:** We'll talk to Ted after the class. (*Laughter*)

**Ted:** Maybe none of the rest of you have had this problem. I'm just talking about getting real. I mean that's real.

**Jeff:** It is getting real, Ted. But here's the thing. This is what I say to people when they start saying this to me. I want to say consistently and regularly. But if you want to talk about once a month as being consistent and regular in light of what the Scripture has to say, then we both know that you've got another problem, right? You know what consistent and regular means. That means that I aim at family worship with my family every day. I may hit that aim and that goal, but I may not weekly, if that. And I'm not going to say that I'm less of a Christian or not a Christian because of that. I'm going to say that there is forgiveness for me in Jesus Christ, and I'm working at this. And I should be working at this.

And I'm going to say this if you're taking that approach. Somebody says to me, "Look. Sometimes I don't struggle with sin." And I want to say to a person like that, "Look, I want to agree with you. Sometimes I don't struggle with sin either." But the fault of that is in us. That's not living the Christian life that we should live. You know, the day that we say, "I just don't feel like struggling," for whatever reason, is the day that we're not living up to our profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

So I certainly want to back away in one sense. And rather than telling you what I want to back away from, what I want to get nearer to is a faithful life in Jesus Christ that is faithful and obedient and consistent and regular, and appeals to the throne of grace for

## ***“Keep Going”***

forgiveness when I fail. I personally don't find a problem with that way of expressing it, especially situating salvation in grace, and also talking about the twofold grace of God and becoming what we ought to become. And this is part of that conversation in what we ought to become. I don't have too much of a problem saying to somebody, “Brother, you've got to get your attitude right and you've got to battle sin.” I don't think that's less than what's in the Scriptures. I mean you guys may, and let's have that conversation. Somebody here had his hand up.

**Participant:** You know, I think that I myself can focus so much on what the other guy is doing? What's that person doing? My matching up to that becomes more of a self-centered thing.

**Jeff:** That's a sin you have to battle, right?

**Second Participant:** Amen.

**First Participant:** The sermon that we had last Sunday was that *“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”* It's with humility before God that I admit that I'm not matching up to Your standard. But I look to You to strive toward that, instead of comparing ourselves to what everybody else is doing.

**Jeff:** Yes. I mean, think about this. That's always a bad way to go, because I can say that I'm always so much better than that person, or I can say, “Well, I've got to get up to that person.” But that person is not the standard.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Yes, Sig?

**Sig:** We have an expression in recovery. You don't judge the outside of another person by your inside.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Sig:** When you look at other people, they look excellent; they have their lives together and things are going well. And I know that inside my heart it's dung, it's crap; I'm struggling. And I look at my buddy and I say, “Why can't I be like him?” And that's not the way to do it.

**Jeff:** You know what? The only thing I would say, Sig, is that if you're admiring the gifts and the graces that God has given in that person, and you're aspiring in a healthy way to follow him as he follows Christ, like Paul says. “Train up men to follow you.” And what he's saying is this. Don't follow me. Don't have them follow you. Follow Christ. I think that's healthy.

You know, Sinclair Ferguson said this to us in class one time. He said, “If the first thing that you recognize in another person is sin, and not Christ in them and His grace, then you have a real problem internally with recognizing what God has been and is doing in other people.

And I think that's so true. It's really important for us in a healthy way to recognize what God is doing in the lives of other people. And I do have men that I do look up to and say that I aspire to be like that as he is in Christ. But you're absolutely right. The flip side is very dangerous. Yes, Don?

**Don:** Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 11:1. *“Imitate me as I imitate Christ.”* There's a balance there.

## ***“Keep Going”***

**Jeff:** Yes. I hate to do this. Let me skip to the finish line. *(Laughter)* I have two things that I want to say.

First of all, if you look at Romans 8:29, what’s the goal?

**Transcriber’s Note:** Romans 8:29. *“For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.”*

**Jeff:** If you look at secular psychology, one of the things that you discover is that secular psychology has no goal for anyone. But Biblical counseling has a goal. It’s to help you look more like Jesus Christ. And the family likeness that we are being shaped into is Christ. And you’ll see that stated in 8:29.

And then there’s the family Friend, the Holy Spirit, who is, as Ferguson said,—this is a line from him—“We are working out what the Spirit has worked in.” That’s a great quote that he has. Anyway, that’s the goal and the finish line.

And when you think about glorification, you think about it as the end process of sanctification. And that’s a good place to end this series. All right, thank you. I’ll see you next week, unless you have questions. *(Applause)*